

AGENDA ITEM: Statewide Information Database Licenses

ISSUES TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD AT THIS MEETING:

1. Consideration of funding for the Librarians' Index to the Internet.

<p>RECOMMENDED MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD: I move that the Library of California Board authorize the expenditure of up to \$192,000 to support the Librarian's Index to the Internet on behalf of the Library of California and that the Board direct its Chief Executive Officer to award these funds to the Peninsula Library System to continue the Librarians' Index to the Internet through June 30, 2001.</p>

At its February meeting the Library of California Board adopted Program Priorities developed at its Planning Session on February 16, 2000, for FY 1999/2000. Included is the priority:

Implement online databases in all regions aimed at the general public and kids.

Also proposed to the Board for adoption at its April meeting are Program Priorities for FY 2000-2001 which include:

Development of statewide database programs and criteria for development.

Staff recommends that \$192,000 be made available to support the Librarians' Index to the Internet (LII) (<http://lii.org>) for the Library of California.

“The Librarians' Index to the Internet is a searchable, annotated subject directory of more than 6,000 Internet resources selected and evaluated by librarians for their usefulness to users of public libraries. It's meant to be used by both librarians and non-librarians as a reliable and efficient guide to described and evaluated Internet resources. “¹

¹ Librarians' Index to the Internet, April 12, 2000, <http://lii.org/search/file/about>

The Librarian's Index to the Internet is a valuable resource for all types of libraries.

"On 4/13/00, a link search in AltaVista found 7,640 pages with links to the Librarians' Index to the Internet. Of these: 2,044 were from the .edu domain (educational institutions); 1,455 from .com (commercial); 1,249 from .us; 864 from .org (non-commercial); 504 from .net; 244 from .ca (California); 113 from .au; 94 from .gov (government); 85 from .se; 83 from .se; and 78 from .uk.." ²

The Librarians' Index to the Internet currently receives over a million hits per month. A more detailed description of the Librarians' Index to the Internet written by Holly Hinman, InFoPeople Project Coordinator, is provided as EXHIBIT A.

Funding for the LII has been through Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) InFoPeople grants to the Peninsula Library System, acting as fiscal agent for the project. The current grant will expire at the end of September 2000. It has been the policy of the Federal Government and the State Library not to use LSTA funds to fund ongoing projects beyond a reasonable time needed to demonstrate their effectiveness. For a project such as the Librarians' Index to the Internet this is a difficult task since libraries and library users from throughout California use the resource, yet no single library or cooperative can step forward and claim ownership.

Another role that the LII fulfills is as a high quality index, merging the best practices of librarians to evaluate and select materials with technologies making it possible to disseminate the index widely, with minimal cost. At a time when there is much concern about Internet access in libraries, the LII is an invaluable resource to front-line librarians who need to promote access to high quality, authoritative electronic information resources.

Considerable cost savings also accrue to libraries that encourage their staff to participate as indexers. There is no need for each library to develop unique lists of resources for every subject area when the development of a unified index shares both workload and expertise among many libraries and librarians. The practice of sharing workload and resources has long been a part of the library landscape as evidenced by both shared cataloging and interlibrary loan networks.

The Library of California information database program has established a precedent of funding library-developed resources as part of its program to provide electronic access for libraries and their users. The Library of California Periodicals/Serials Database (LOCPSDB) is an example where the California Digital Library uses Library of California funds to merge serials holdings information from libraries throughout the state and to make them available online.

Content and Development

² Librarians' Index to the Internet, April 13, 2000, <http://lil.org/search/file/quotes>

Volunteer librarian indexers provide the LII content. Currently more than ninety-five indexers contribute to this resource, following selection criteria established by InFoPeople project managers (EXHIBIT B).

As part of their ongoing efforts to improve and expand the LII project InFoPeople managers have recommended that an editorial and advisory committee be established to assist with content-related and developmental issues. Some recommendations for participants on this committee include:

- SunSite Management (LII host)
- InFoPeople Management
- Indexers
- State Library, to represent the Board
- Information Scientist(s)
- LII staff

The editorial and advisory committee will be formed and in operation prior to June 30, 2000.

Evaluation

The Librarians' Index to the Internet is evaluated on a continuing basis through the use of web site statistical evaluation tools. These tools count the number and types of users coming to the site based on their Internet domain name. Internal use of the site is also conducted to determine the usefulness of the various web pages and search tools. In addition to statistics, indexers, LII management and InFoPeople management continually evaluate the site and elicit comments from its indexers and users. A summary of usage statistics and comments from users that are posted on the LII web site are included as EXHIBIT C.

Alternatives for LII Support:

State Library and InFoPeople staffs have both investigated alternatives the Librarian's Index to the Internet. Among these options are:

Subscriptions or sponsorships: Libraries who wish to subscribe to the LII could support the program through the use of subscriptions.

Collaboration with other web sites: Over the years there has been some discussion related to joining the Librarians' Index to the Internet to other web search entities, whether commercial or non-commercial.

Advertising: Many web sites support themselves through the sale of advertising. Representatives from the LII could investigate this option and develop a marketing program to imbed advertisements or sponsorship tools into the web site.

Continuation with LSTA: It is likely that staff will develop a LSTA grant application to continue the InFoPeople project and the Librarians' Index to the Internet into the next LSTA cycle. This is a competitive grant process, subject to available funding and priorities. Whether the project is funded for another year or not, it is not advisable to rely on LSTA to continue all program elements indefinitely.

Discontinue the LII: A final alternative is to allow the current LSTA grant to conclude and not to attempt to continue the LII on any basis.

The development of alternative sources of funding for the LII raises some common areas of concern. Among them are:

- **Ownership.** The LII was developed using federal, state and local funds. It is not possible to copyright the LII as the exclusive property of any entity though it may not be necessary to do so in every case.
- **Administration:** It is not clear what type of administrative entity would administer a subscription program, even on a cost recovery basis.
- **Restriction of access:** There are models where subscribers can support a public resource. A good example could be public radio and public television. There are other models where subscribers have exclusive access to a resource. Some careful thought must be given as to how LII subscribers would be differentiated from general public users.
- **Collaboration with Indexers:** Indexers are volunteers and many of them are motivated by the opportunity to develop a high quality resource "By Librarians for Everyone". The indexers themselves are a valuable resource to the project and their ongoing participation needs to be taken into consideration.
- **Technical:** Efforts to develop specialized access for subscribers or to otherwise modify the site, access to it, or specialized products, all add to the complexity of the index and its technical management.
- **Overhead:** Efforts to develop alternative sources of funding all require their own development costs. Funding and resources that could otherwise be put into the development of the site would be redirected to identifying and developing revenue streams.

Sponsorship by the Library of California does not necessarily imply that other funding alternatives should be discarded. The responsibility for this activity can be shared among State Library Staff, InFoPeople and LII staff, and the editorial and advisory committee.

Attached are sample screens from the Librarians' Index to the Internet, (lii.org).